Bridging the skills gap: A novel approach to delivering academic skills development

Catriona Matthews, Student as Researcher officer

#digifest20
Bridging the skills gap: A novel approach to delivering academic skills development

Catriona Matthews | Student as Researcher Officer
The project

- Core first year lecture
- 50 students
- Classics

20 min lecture interventions

- Introduction to HE study behaviours
- Information research

Academic skills and discipline specific content

- Optional badged portfolio
- Opportunity for exhibition review published in student journal

Links to employability portfolio
Transition

Planning a university essay

- Confident
- Not Confident
- Unsure
- (blank)

Studying and interpreting ancient objects

- Confident
- Not Confident
- Unsure
- (blank)
Approaches

Icons: Photo3idea_studio, Freepik, mynamepong from Flaticon.com
Padlet & Mentimeter

Rank the online sources in order of how trustworthy you think they are

1st | Copies of full texts from a university webpage
2nd | Museum webpage
3rd | Blog post written by an academic
4th | An essay from academia.edu
5th | Wikipedia page
6th | Blog post

What makes it a poor essay (give 2 points) - What would make it a stronger essay (give 2 points)

Poor essay:
- Lack of critical analysis of sources.
- Lack of focus or structure.
- Arguments could be more coherent and complex.
- Sources could be used more carefully and critically.

Poor essay:
- No footnotes.
- No primary sources.
- No citations.
- Poor bibliography.
- Poor essay structure.
- They take way too long to get to the point.
- They refer to the argument in general rather than describing the argument in the text.
- They don't engage with the critics they reference.

Points to improve:
- Better structuring.
- Use more primary sources rather than secondary sources referencing primary sources.
- I would give a 55.

Points to improve:
- More primary sources.
- Add more detail.
- Improve the bibliography.
- Sources should be used more critically.

...Part Two: Publication
- Consideration not enough references.
- EBR: closer structure.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Poor essay structure, lack of critical analysis, lack of focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Similar to 1.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Similar to 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Overall, the sources lack critical analysis and focus. The essays could be improved with more primary sources and better structuring.
Outcomes

The good:

‘Enabled me to understand what I need to do in future to improve my essays…’

‘Having it embedded in the module was cool, but I think the things you covered in some weeks was too specific…’

‘Study skills in lectures because in all honesty I might be more inclined to go. They are useful but I don’t always think so when I see just a session of study skills.’

The bad:

‘Study skills was useful but just way too late.’

‘Most of the useful topics were covered after I’d begun writing my essays.’

‘Blitzing them would be better.’

‘Sessions on referencing was useful but having them in week 10 made it a bit pointless.’
Moving forward
References:


Catherine Meehan & Kristy Howells, ‘In search of the feeling of ‘belonging’ in higher education: UG students transition into higher education’, Journal of further and higher education, 43:10 (2019), pp. 1376-1390

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